



Revolution in Paris, France: February 1848

The First International

The [Communist Manifesto](#) is a deliberately internationalist document. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were deployed to write it by the international [Communist League](#), of which they were members. The League was strongly based among European continental workers in London, where the first edition was printed (in German) while Marx was running a part of it in Brussels, Belgium. Engels was in Germany, and Communist League members were in action in [many other countries](#), including France.

The Manifesto's publication coincided almost exactly with the outbreak of revolution in France, in February of 1848, which quickly spread to other countries. The final [Chapter IV](#) of the Manifesto says among other things that: “... *the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things,*” and it finishes with the famous slogan “***Working Men of All Countries, Unite!***”

The Communist Manifesto is one of the first two books of Marxism to come into the public realm. Both were written and published in 1847/early 1848 (the other book is “The Poverty of Philosophy”).

Marxism was internationalist from the start and it has never ceased to be so.

Most of the revolutions of 1848 were aimed at overthrowing feudal monarchies, or in other words, **turning kingdoms into republics**, which necessarily meant supporting the republican faction of the bourgeoisie in the anti-monarchy revolution. The content of Marxist internationalism to this day includes relentless opposition to monarchy.

Marx’s 1864 Address to the International Working Men’s Association (**The First International**) was the consequence of his being invited and elected to the leadership of that organisation, formed in London in a hall next to where the South African High Commission now stands. Please read the Address in the attached or downloadable document. Marx had been in exile in London since 26 August 1849 after being banished in quick succession from Belgium, Germany and France. By 1864, Marx’s reputation was that of being the foremost internationalist of his time.

The First International survived until the fall of the Paris Commune in 1871. The **Second International** was established at a gathering in Chur, Switzerland ten years later in 1881, two years before Marx’s death in 1883 and fourteen years before Engels’ death in 1895. The Second International fostered Lenin

and Rosa Luxemburg among many others. Its collapse in 1914 marked the great division between the opportunists (such as the “renegade” Kautsky) who in the face of imperialist war folded their internationalism and became cowardly national chauvinists, and on the other hand the true internationalists like Luxemburg and Lenin who opposed the imperialist war. These latter ones, the true internationalists, were also the communists, who established the communist parties of today.

If the workers of the world had remained united against war in 1914, there would not have been any war.

The [Third International](#), also called the [Communist International](#) (or Comintern) was launched in Soviet Russia less than two years after the October Revolution, in 1919, and in 1921 it admitted the Communist Party of South Africa into membership, thus founding the party that is today known as the South African Communist Party, the SACP.

The history of the communists is an unbroken line of internationalism of which the SACP is an inseparable part. The SACP is still internationalist. It continues to promote the same relentless anti-monarchical, anti-feudal, anti-colonial, anti-neo-colonial, anti-imperialist cause as before; and it will do so until the day of continental permanent proletarian revolution dawns in Africa.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [International Working Mens’ Association Inaugural Address, 1864, Marx](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).